

THE RICHMOND DISPATCH.

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SUNDAY.....JANUARY 16, 1898.

THE TRADING STAMP EVIL.

The substitute for the Murphy anti-trading-stamp bill the House Committee on Banking and Currency reported yesterday dodges the issue. It does not afford the relief asked for by a large majority of the merchants of Richmond, which majority embraces users as well as non-users of the stamps. It juggles with a principle. It would effect a compromise with a system which experience has proved tends to the subversion of sound business methods, and economy, and judiciousness on the part of the purchasers, and which judicial decision has denounced as a restriction upon trade.

But, aside from this broad ground of objection to the substitute, it is obnoxious in many other respects. It leaves existing contracts just where they are, and makes no provision for protecting outsiders against being charged prohibitory rates for the stamps by the companies. Exclusiveness has been the great inducement heretofore offered to merchants to purchase the stamps, and if that feature is eliminated from the system, those who have continued to champion it will soon begin to realize a shrinkage in its advantages to them. It seems impossible that the companies will be able to maintain their hold if they do not give special privileges to some of their patrons in the way of prices for the stamps or otherwise. Furthermore, it is not clear what is meant by the provision in the bill that "nothing herein contained shall be construed to include, apply to, or affect existing contracts." If this applies to the provision of existing contracts as to territory and one or two men in a certain line of business, then the other provisions of the bill are brutum fulmen, a jingle of words, and strongly suggestive of a cat in the meat-tub.

In the second place, granting that we are mistaken, that prices could not, and would not, be raised, so far as new customers for the stamps are concerned, and that the companies could do a profitable business under non-exclusive regulations, the tax-like feature of the system would still remain. Many business-men who now use the stamps, but would be glad to shake off the tax, would be forced in self-defense to continue their use, and by the same token many non-users would feel compelled to purchase them. Either as it now operates or would operate under the substitute the system puts the business of Richmond largely at the mercy of the trading-stamp companies. As regards many small merchants, it might operate to break them.

So, we repeat, the substitute dodges the issue, juggles with a principle, and fails to give the relief asked for. We confess that, in view of the thorough manner in which the evils of the system have been exploited, we are utterly at a loss to comprehend the influences that led the committee to formulate the makeshift. However, we shall await with patience their explanations, which will be doubtless forthcoming when the substitute shall have been pressed to a vote, confident that they will be in their seats and ready to meet the issue squarely. That issue is whether the Legislature will give our business-men the relief prayed for, or perpetuate the onerous tax the trading-stamp companies impose.

SENATORIAL PRIMARY.
Mr. Reddy's bill to provide for the holding of a senatorial primary election will command general attention, we believe, and will force the Legislature to give early and earnest consideration to this question.

The Democrats of Virginia wish to nominate their United States senators hereafter by primary elections, and they ought to be privileged to do so under the sanctity and safeguards of law.

Whether Mr. Reddy's bill is the best that can be devised for the purpose in view, we do not know—not having examined it carefully as yet—but we hail it as a step in the right direction, and we thank Mr. Reddy for the action he has taken.

Now let the subject be kept constantly before the Legislature, and the people will see to it that decisive action is had at this session.

The proposition to change presidential inauguration day to April 20th is well received, because of the fact that March weather is rarely, if ever, agreeable. But, as the New York Herald suggests, why not make the date May-Day? Almost any

citizen may become President, and then again, he may not.

THE BEET-SUGAR BUSINESS.

From what we see in our Virginia exchanges and from many expressions of opinion that we have heard, the heart of our farming community is set upon having beet culture experimented with to the aid of the State.

Close inquiries are being made by legislative committees to see how far this may be done, having in view the inviolability of the contracts with the Davis Shoe Company, and also keeping in mind the needs of the penitentiary, especially should the Legislature authorize the building of an additional cell-house.

Of course, no one suggests that the State should break any contract of hers, and it is equally assured that if a practical scheme of finance can be first arranged, provision will be made for reserving enough convict labor to do the common laborers' work upon the new building.

We shall not refer to the competing schemes farther than to express the hope that one may be found which will give encouragement to capitalists to build a factory in Virginia. We should prefer to see the factory located in the neighborhood of Richmond; but if any other Virginia community is willing to do more than we are to secure it, why we must be content to see it go elsewhere. Of one thing we feel quite sure, and this is that sooner or later we shall have beet-sugar factories in this State.

The great trouble is to make a start. The difficulty is not so much to get the money to build the factory as to convince the capitalists that the required beet supply will be obtained. If we people of Virginia could give reasonable assurances that the factory would have the needed beet supply for several years to come, the money for building it would be forthcoming promptly. There's the rub. Never can we have a factory until those who would put their money into it see where the beets to run it are coming from. Hence, it becomes the duty of the Legislature to do what it can in the matter of encouraging the culture of beets. And thus we believe it is possible to do without hurt to any existing contract and without interfering with the proposed improvement of the penitentiary building.

All the evidence before us goes to show that beet-sugar has come to stay, and that beets may be cultivated as successfully in this country as in Germany, France, or Belgium—the countries where the industry flourishes most. On this question we append the following extract from an able article by Wallace P. Willett, which recently appeared in the New York Evening Post:

Utah built a sugar-factory in 1890-91, and has made a success of it, paying dividends recently of 27 per cent. Owing to this success, additional factories are contemplated in that State.

Everybody knows that in California the beet-sugar industry has grown rapidly from 1893, when the Alvarado Company started in with the successful experts from the Wisconsin factory. It is a fact, however, that California had its disastrous year of failures while learning from experience the value of money. The beet, but by patient perseverance all these difficulties have been overcome, and the industry in California is now on quite as safe and much more profitable a basis than it is in any European country. Immense sums of money are now going into the largest class of factories for sugar manufacture, and the largest control of acreage for beet-root culture. It is easy enough to get capital into California beet-sugar.

Such objections of successful beet-sugar production are an attraction to capitalists that cannot be resisted. Nebraska and Utah have also object-lessons of successful beet-sugar production. It does not require much examination of the history of beet culture in other States to discover the causes of the failures. They are all within sight—too limited capital invested; machinery not adapted to taking the 13 to 15 per cent. sugar out of the beets that is in them; the fact that the farmers, as a rule, are not business-men, and had not a high regard for a contract, and would leave the factory "in the lurch" for a sufficient supply of beets. But the world moves. What was impracticable a few years ago, has become quite practicable now.

It would be absurd to say that from beets of 12 per cent. to 20 per cent. sugar content, 5 per cent. to 7 per cent. can only be drawn in these days. Any good machinery manufacturer will guarantee to take 10 per cent. to 12 per cent. at least out of the beets.

The day is passed for thinking of going into beet-sugar manufacture on a capital of \$2,000 or \$5,000. Large factories, of \$50,000 or \$60,000, are only to be built by the State, or by the State and private capital. A plant costing \$200,000, and working capital sufficient to pay cash for one season's crop of beets at the rate of 30 to 40 tons per day for 100 working days, are what is required for profitable operation.

Many such objections as are contemplated in this and other States, and if the preliminary experiments of beet culture are carefully conducted, the railroad facilities sufficient, the supplies of water, lime, coal, and labor abundant, and the beet-sugar property located and constructed, the agricultural end thoroughly looked after the season through, and, in fact, the whole business as carefully managed as is one of our great sugar refineries, there is no doubt whatever that the enterprise will pay very handsomely in dividends to the stockholders from the very first season's operations.

A full and sufficient protection to the industry is afforded by the present sugar tariff, and it is not too much to say that, with the next five to ten years' experience, and the improved methods that will be found by this inventive nation for saving of expenses, from the sowing of the seed to the marketing of the sugar, the industry will go on thriving and increasing without any tariff protection whatever.

Fifty thousand tons of beet-sugar are now produced in the United States for export to the European market. The production of beet-sugar has increased from 2,000 tons in 1830 to 20,000 tons in 1897.

EDUCATIONAL FUNDS.

The author of a communication in Wednesday's Dispatch stated the cost of public education in Virginia at about \$1,000,000 per annum. He had in mind only the amount spent by the State for public schools. To this we must add \$200,000, voted to colleges, in annuities and in excess of interest. And we are probably within bounds when we say that our cities, towns, and counties raise \$800,000 more per annum for educational purposes. So that to do our Virginia people full justice, it should be said they expend about \$2,000,000 per annum for purposes of education in common schools, colleges, and universities.

The bulk of what the State spends comes from money dedicated to this specific purpose by the State Constitution—to wit: The capitation tax, fines, and a share of the taxes on real and personal property.

"The excess of interest" referred to amounts to about \$125,000 per annum, we believe. This is the sum of the annual interest on the bonds held by colleges in excess of what said bonds would bear were they in the hands of individual holders.

In other words, Virginia, recognizing the immense good that the colleges are doing, did not require of them the same abatement of their claims that was required of the private holders of her old bonds.

With reference to the retrenchment proposed in the public-school system by reduced expenditures for county superintendents, &c., we have to say that any saving in that direction would be to the advantage of the public school fund—not to the public treasury—unless, indeed, the Legislature should withhold the special appropriations that it makes for schools.

Many years ago the public treasury got into arrears to the public-school fund, and it became necessary to reimburse the schools by voting \$300,000 a year out of the public treasury. The sum due has long since been paid, but the appropriations continue to be made. Nor could the public schools now do without them—unless an equivalent should be given them from some other quarter.

The predominant public sentiment in Virginia would not suffer the efficiency of the schools to be injured in any way; nor, so far as we know, is there any disposition on the part of any member of the Legislature to make any movement of that sort in the prosecution of the work of retrenchment or upon any other occasion.

DON QUIXOTE.

It is announced that Ignatius Donnelly, the grand champion of the theory that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, is at work on another Baconian cryptogram. Also, that the learned Ignatius intimates that it is possible that Bacon is responsible for Don Quixote, and that he expects another castigation at the hands of the critics.

Ignatius expects nothing of the kind, but he fears exposure or certain proofs that would tend to render him more famous than he now is.

His "intimation" regarding Don Quixote is merely evidence that he is as modest as was Bacon in not claiming the authorship of Shakespeare. It is simply a little subterfuge to divert the public from a course of investigation and reasoning the continued pursuit of which could but result in painfully embarrassing Ignatius by trumpeting his fame and name the world over.

While we admire the modesty and diffidence of Ignatius, truth and justice compel us to lay bare his little subterfuge and crown him with the laurels he so richly deserves. If our exposure shall compel him to flee to some vast wilderness, some boundless country of shade, in order to escape the plaudits of the admiring millions, we can't help it.

The fact is, that Ignatius Donnelly wrote Don Quixote himself. We know he will deny the soft impeachment, but it is demonstrable beyond all shadow of doubt that only his Quixotic genius could have produced that work. Henceforth, the names of Donnelly and Bacon will be linked in illustrating the supreme exaltation of modesty.

The people of Louisiana on Tuesday voted in favor of calling a convention to revise and amend their State Constitution. The convention is to be limited in its powers and its special purpose is to circumscribe the suffrage qualifications of that State as far as possible. The Picaune says that at first there was a demand for an unlimited convention. There was, however, a good deal of doubt as to whether a legislature could limit a constitutional convention, and so the bright legal minds of the Legislature went to work and evolved a plan whereby the people themselves in calling the convention should limit it. First it was decided to fix the convention and election for a time when no local or State election could interfere and result in the selling out of the convention for a few petty offices, as was done in the case of the suffrage amendments defeated so overwhelmingly at the last State election.

Then there were many other matters to be safeguarded to prevent any important element which might be affected from antagonizing the call. The Picaune says that these limitations cover these things. The limitations are as follows, and it will be seen that in them there is not one which could in any way interfere with the great and primary object of the convention—the elimination of the ignorant and purchasable element from the franchise.

(a) Whereby the bonded indebtedness of the State, or of any parochial, municipal, levee, or other political corporation thereof shall be affected, impaired, or reduced, reduced, suspended or abolished, without the consent of the holders of such bonds of security.

(b) Whereby the rate of taxation as now limited by the Constitution shall be increased, other than for purposes of aid by parishes and municipalities, to public schools and public improvements upon the approval of the property taxpayers affected by such increase.

(c) Whereby the levee system as now organized under, and by virtue of Articles 23 to 216, inclusive, and 270 of the present Constitution, and the laws enacted in pursuance thereof, shall be altered, amended, or affected.

(d) Whereby the terms of office of the Governor, or of any of the judges of the State, district, parochial, or municipal officers, whether elected or appointed, shall be reduced or shortened, or the salary thereof reduced or diminished, or the first Tuesday after the third Monday in April, 1900.

(e) Whereby the offices of Chief Justice and associate justices of the Supreme Court shall be made elective, or whereby the terms of office of the then incumbents shall be shortened or their salaries diminished.

(f) Whereby the present constitutional prohibition of lotteries shall be changed, altered or amended.

(g) Removing the capital from Baton Rouge.

The Baltimore Sun of yesterday in its commercial and monetary report says: "Virginia State bonds continue to advance, the new 3's selling at 89½, and the century's at 70½, with twenty days for

delivery of the last named. These are new high records and the close was at the top. Stocks of southern railroads were dealt in for small lots at firm values. Georgia Southern and Florida common brought 23, the second preferred 43½, and the first preferred 80. Georgia and Alabama common had a fair movement at 9, and the preferred was steady at 15.

Zola, in daring the French Government to prosecute him, may be only endeavoring to secure material for another realistic story—about the inside of a jail, for example.

The suggestion of the golden rod as a national flower for this country cannot reasonably be expected to strike the silveries as happy.

Another stomach has been removed, this time in St. Louis. The operation is pronounced a success. The patient died.

Habana finds it difficult to overcome that Weyler habit. This is all there is in 'de recent disturbance, we suppose.

No vaccination, no vote, is said to be the law in Norway.

"Twins Ever Thus."

It's struck this intellect of mine. That press and tradesmen oft combine. To wait man's interval of need. And then increase of trouble breed.

I never to my cellar go, And ascertain the coal is low. But straightaway they do advertise, The fact that coal is on the rise.

Expert Judgment.

"Which one of human life," he asked, "To which your skill is daily tasked. Would you, with inference mature, Pronounce most difficult of cure?"

A smile the doctor's face upon, Proclaimed it was an easy one, As with emphatic utterance he Straightaway replied, "Delinquency!"

No Ground for Hesitancy.

Fretman: I declare, it's got to be so with me that when I go out in the morning I have to stop on the corner and think which direction I can take to avoid meeting a creditor.

Carter: Thank fortune, I'm no longer a prey to any such condition as that.

Fretman: You don't mean to say that you don't owe anybody.

Carter: Who said so? I simply mean that there is no direction I can take that will insure me such exemption, and so I don't have to hesitate.

A Human Frailty.

"My favorite month is February," said the calendar, affecting a languid droop from its pose on the studio wall.

"That's a singular preference, isn't it?" replied the young year, sweeping by with the dancing hours in its train.

"Not if I know myself," replied the calendar. "I can take a couple of days off then, you know."

A Reflection.

Chollie: Do you know, my dear boy, that I saw the most wretched sight this morn'g that you could possibly conceive of?

Jollie: Ah! Then you do have a mirror in your room, eh?

Non-Payment Assured.

"If I'd known at the time my agent rented that hall who the tenant was to be, I'd never have signed the lease; I'm

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